

HB 6517

My name is Catherine Krenicky. I reside in Pawcatuck, CT, which is a subdivision of Stonington. I write in full support of HB 6517, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Task Force to Analyze the Implementation of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction and Training. I am fortunate to live in a town where the current Director of Special Services, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Board of Education recognize the importance of support and training of teachers in dyslexia education and structured literacy. I know through their efforts and investment that future students in my district ought not have the experience in public education that my children had. I am also aware that not every district has both the means and commitment that is currently found in Stonington.

The Literacy Foundation Project identified that 85% of juvenile offenders have trouble reading and that 1/3 of the United States prison population, the largest in the world, cannot read. Mental health difficulties, dropout rates, substance use, truancy, and low life time achievement are all disproportionately high in poor readers. We have been fighting a reading war since 2000. There is evidence from the National Reading Panel that explicit instruction helps develop better readers. The International Dyslexia Association has recognized that students with dyslexia span all races, socio-economic variables, and include English and non-English language learners. Since 2014, legislation has been passed in Connecticut to move outcomes for students with dyslexia. However, the December, 2020 report on the findings of the dyslexia task force found no distinct plan with CSDE of implementation, monitoring, or accountability for the legislation.

By ensuring pre-service candidates and inservice educators receive an appropriate education in structured literacy, HB 6517 addresses this discrepancy. Filling gaps in teacher knowledge will ensure the needs of students with dyslexia are met. Expertise and confidence in structured literacy will permeate the experience of students in Connecticut and have lasting impact. The implementation of core professional standards around literacy will lay the groundwork for compliance and set knowledge content that teachers will possess at the district level. The importance of aligning K-3 screening with evidence based practices

and research cannot be understated. Early identification leads to appropriate intervention, and better outcomes for students, families, and educators. HB 6517 is particularly important as we emerge from the pandemic where education has been interrupted and stress has been high. Educating teachers will empower them with more of the tools needed to reach the variety of students found in the classroom. It is legislation that supports educators and students with accountability and compliance. It is welcomed and applauded.